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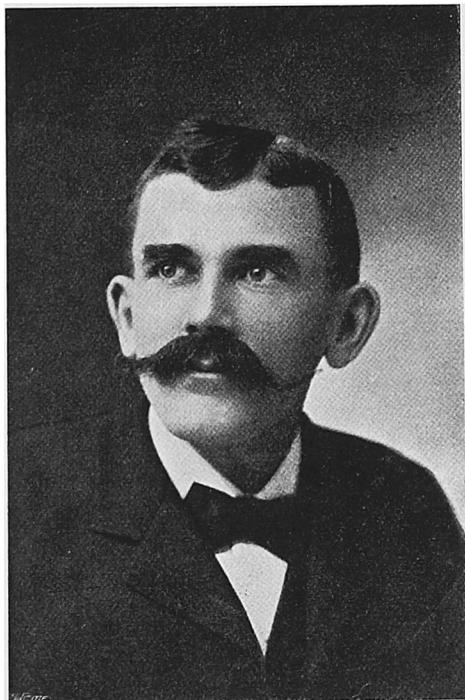
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THE ARTIST

O TTO ZAHN AND SOME OF HIS BOOK-BINDINGS.

By W. G. BOWDOIN.

ACCORDING to Burton, the binding of a book was, of old, a shrine on which the finest workmanship in bullion and the costliest gems were



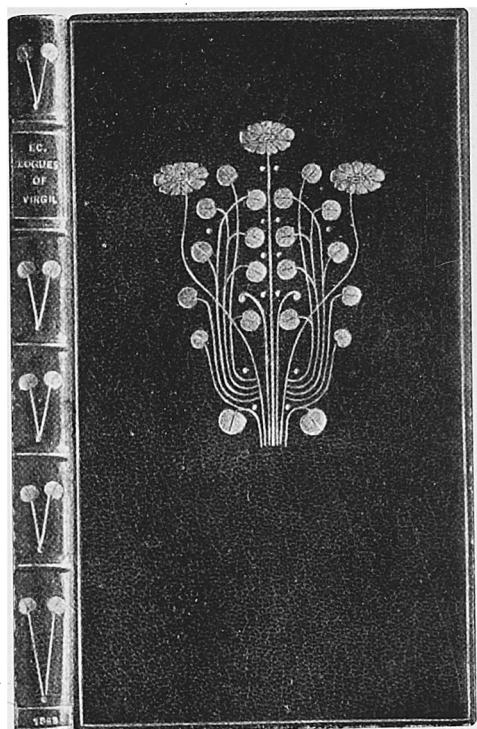
OTTO ZAHN

lavished. In these days of commercial bindings when edition work must be got through, in hundreds and thousands of copies by mechanical means, we have sometimes forgotten that special book-binding is one of the fine arts. It is only within a comparatively recent period that a pronounced taste for the exterior decoration of books has arisen, or rather has been revived and in the gratification of this taste it was once true that only a select few have revelled. With even a small encouragement, however, a very large ingenuity in binding has been inspired and displayed and there is now a constantly growing tendency toward the glorification of a master author by a master binder. In other words, book-binding is being considered, appreciated and used to a greater extent than ever before. A good book is worthy of the best attire and a

truly artistic setting that shall in some sense be adequate and commensurate.

There are many people, even in England, who are fond of books, who patronise Mudie and possibly even Quaritch, but who have never in all their lives had occasion to handle and examine a really typical example of the work of a bookbinder in what is sometimes called art binding. If this is true of England, much more has it been true in the United States, but with the continued growth of luxury, book-binding has, with other things, had its share of recognition and encouragement.

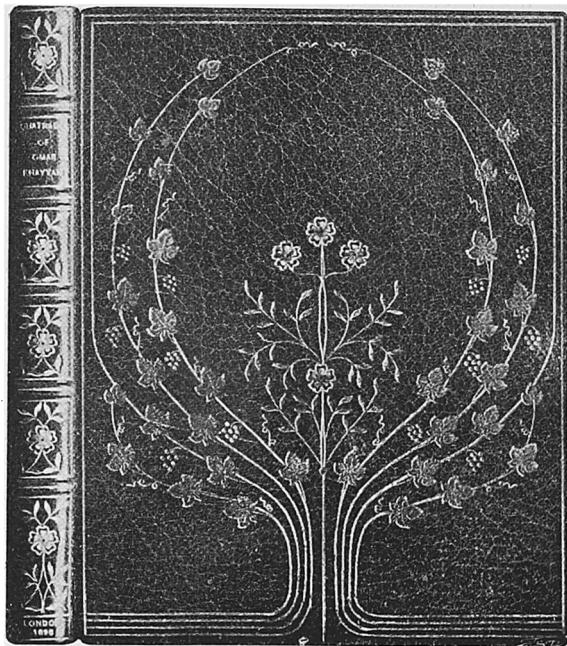
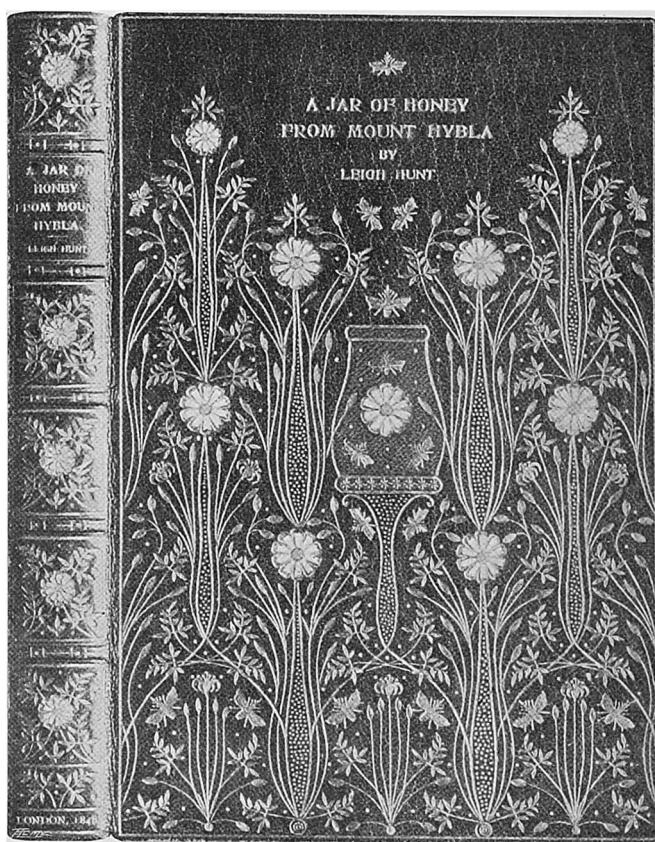
The binding of a book that shall be worthy of acknowledgment as art work requires the most delicate skill and is not by any means easy to accomplish. When all is finished the proper appreciation of the best work done is still largely limited to the few and not the many. The horizon of book-binding, it must be said, is circumscribed, but yet it is nevertheless true that both in this country and in America bookbinders are now receiving far more appreciation than has ever heretofore been the case. An increasing



CHAUDRON CRUSHED LEVANT,
HAND-TOOLED IN ORIGINAL DESIGNS
BY OTTO ZAHN

OTTO ZAHN

BOOK COVER IN DEEP RED
CRUSHED LEVANT
BY OTTO ZAHN



PEA-GREEN CRUSHED LEVANT, FLOWERS INLAID IN
CRIMSON, HAND-TOOLED IN ORIGINAL DESIGNS
BY OTTO ZAHN

number of men and women of undoubted talent, now find it possible to achieve not only support but also distinction as bookbinders.

Notable among the little group of less than ten American bookbinders who have grown up within the last few years, is Otto Zahn of Memphis, Tennessee; which is not even a seaboard city. Mr. Zahn is a transplanted American: that is to say, he is not native, but is of America by election instead of by birth. His father was a Protestant clergyman, and his fatherland was Germany, but his education in bookbinding and otherwise has not been confined to the German Empire, but is cosmopolitan, in that he has since 1873 journeyed here and there, at home and abroad, and incidentally worked in some of the best binderies at his chosen and much loved art-craft in Switzerland, France, Italy, Egypt, England, Brazil, the West Indies, Mexico, and finally in the United States. He was first in New York but is now permanently in Memphis.

BOOK-BINDING

No binder's device of any value, no wrinkle that could be of the smallest service to him, in his own work in the forwarding or finishing, no matter what the point of origin, has been suffered to escape him. With a keen sense of the artistic strong within him, Mr. Zahn has reached his present achievements, as a binder, as he himself says, by constant application, conscientious work, arduous study, that in connection with an ambitious desire to excel has fostered and stimulated the talent that was his by inheritance, until now the name of Otto Zahn stands for, and is a guarantee of, a fine book-binding.

Book-binding is a complex art, and chief among its requirements is originality. But originality also signifies a thorough mastery of the principles by means of which the great past masters of the art arrived at their excellence. The principles of ornament must be adapted to book-binding with consideration for the possibilities of it, and the limitations signified.

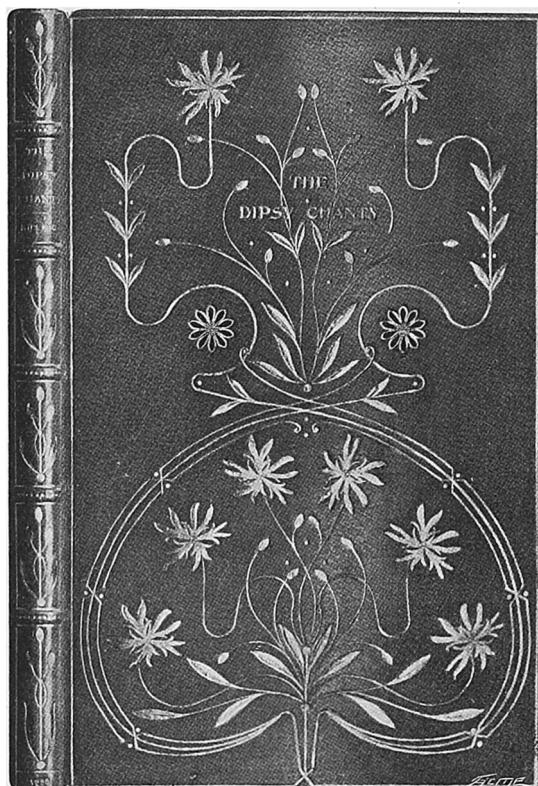
The sole aim of book decoration is not symbolism alone, but beauty and artistic fitness of design as well. The binder, therefore, who seeks to reach his goal by seizing the mind and forcibly dragging it to the book's contents by violence is not likely to create so favourable or so lasting an impression as he who attracts by his harmony of colour results, well selected designs, forms and dexterous craftsmanship that out of the *tout ensemble* makes the book, as tooled and finished, a thing of beauty and joy for ever.

Art binding signifies much more than simply casing a book. Technical and practical knowledge are primal requisites truly, but to this must

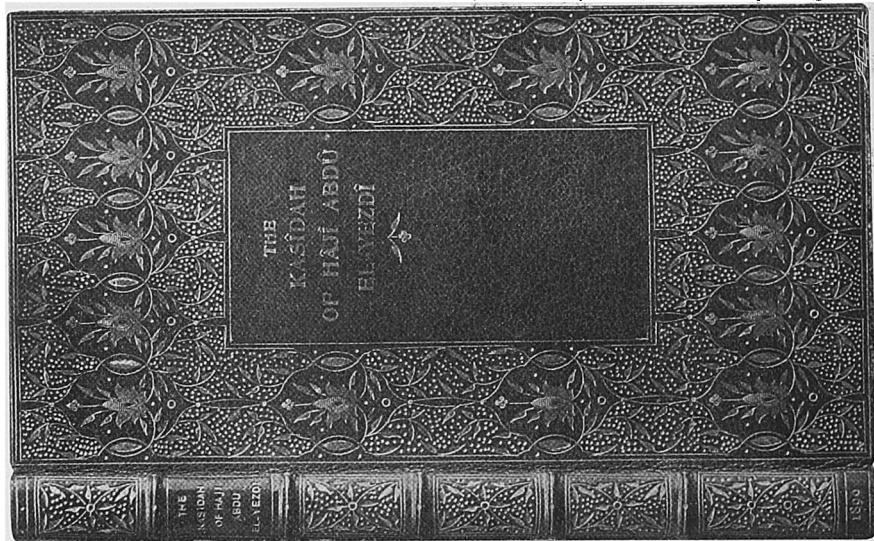
also be added refined taste, unerring judgment, a matchless technique and a creative gift for original compositions. We love to turn with admiration to the contemplation of the classic bindings and yet any one of the modern masters of art binding are far more technically perfect than were the greatest and best of the sixteenth century binders. Were the modern binders absolutely bound by the traditions of their brethren of the Renaissance, their present patrons would have to change mightily and become far less fastidious than is now the case, not in isolated instances alone, but universally, in order to be thus pleased and satisfied.

This does not signify that the bindings of the Renaissance have been over-estimated. They have their place and their just appreciation. They will never cease to influence the present-day binder, but the fact remains that they are crude. The critical study of the present style, as exemplified by Mr. Zahn and echoed by contemporaneous workers in this field at home or in foreign lands, reveals the surprising fact that we have a characteristic style in this our day and

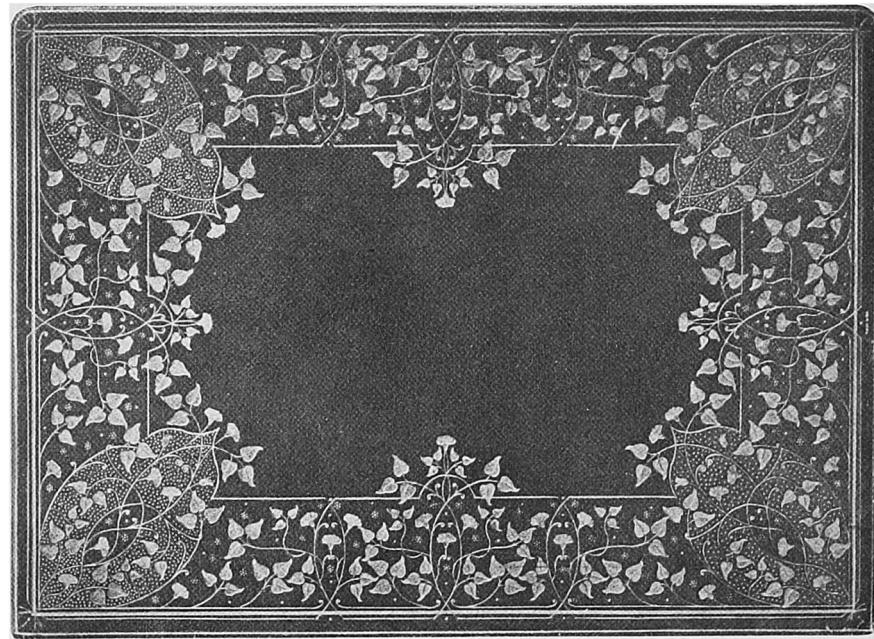
generation that bids fair to impress itself largely upon the immediate future, and that style is made up of domestic floral motifs and foliage, duly conventionalised and combined with delicate line tracery into organic designs from which there is, of course, many departures; but, in spite of strayings, wanderings and jauntlings in by-paths, the tendency is to come back again and again to this nineteenth century standard that obtains not alone in America but all over the art-loving world—in Italy, in Spain, France,



BOOK-COVER IN BLUE CRUSHED LEVANT
BY OTTO ZAHN

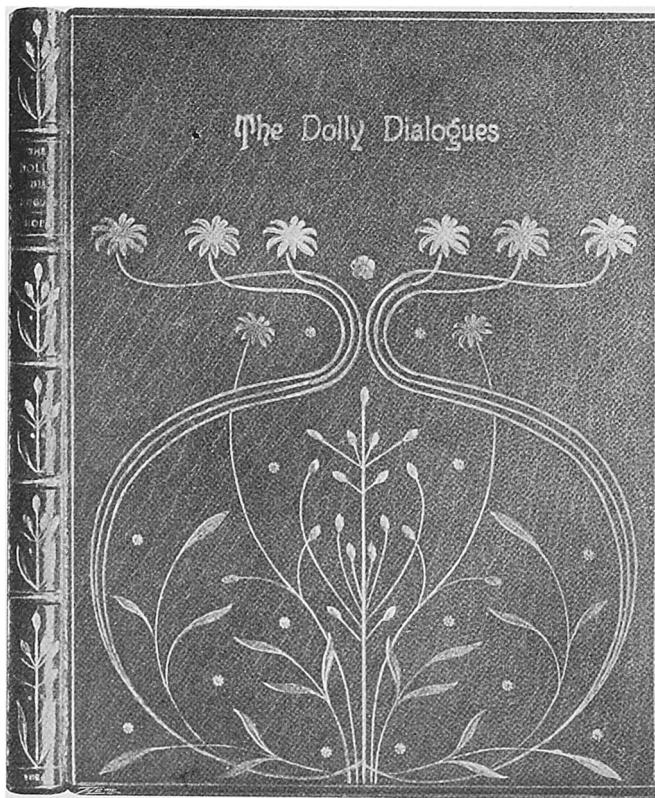


BOOK COVER IN APPLE-GREEN CRUSHED
LEVANT, FLOWERS INLAID IN CRIMSON
BY OTTO ZAHN



'THE BOOK OF THE FAIR'
PLUM-COLOURED CRUSHED LEVANT BINDING
BY OTTO ZAHN

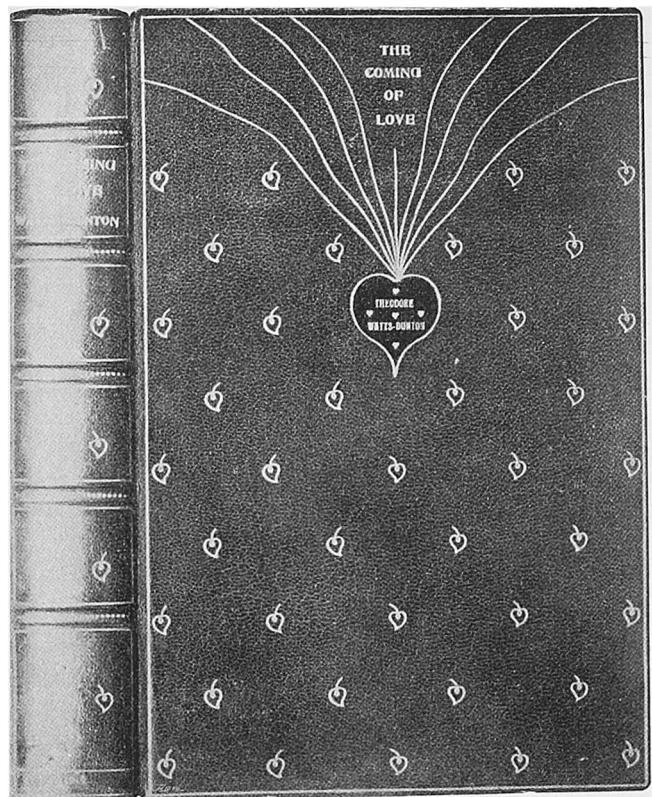
THE ARTIST



BOOK-COVER IN RUBY-RED CRUSHED
LEVANT, FLOWERS INLAID IN WHITE
BY OTTO ZAHN

England, or wherever else the influence of Art is manifested.

The attention of those interested in book-binding was first drawn to the work of Otto Zahn by the display of some of his binding results at Agricultural Hall, London, in 1893, where they attracted much attention and were highly commended by the best judges. His binding of Morris's 'King Florus' for Mr. and Mrs. Tregaskis of London was most satisfactory, and his, with the seven others selected from the seventy-five bindings of this work that were commissioned, were reproduced autochromatically in the Tregaskis catalogue, and added greatly to his reputation both in London and in New York. His exhibitions at the Grolier Club and at Scribner's in 1897 established and extended his reputation and created a demand for his bindings far and



BOOK-COVER IN CRIMSON CRUSHED LEVANT WITH MIRROR POLISH
BY OTTO ZAHN

OTTO ZAHN

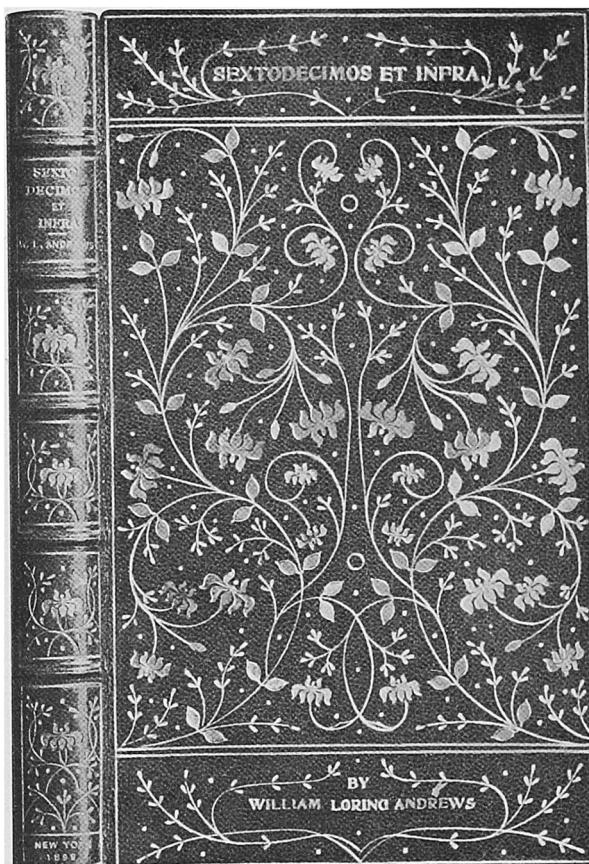
wide. He has but recently become a member of the firm of S. C. Toof and Co., of which he has long been manager.

His treatment of 'The Eclogues of Virgil,' as illustrated, shows a binding in Chaudron crushed levant with highly conventionalised curves, tooled in gilt and terminating in leaves somewhat similar to those of the Egyptian lotus. These are interspersed with a triple-rayed flower motif, introducing straight and curved stems, with intermediate dots.

'The Book of the Fair' is in plum-coloured crushed levant. The flower of the ipomoea and its stems and leaves enters into and, intertwined, goes to form a deep-tooled border, in which corner pieces are accented by means of dotted tool marks that are outlined by the flower stems, together with straight and curved lines that compose the border and give it definition. The resultant panel is delicately invaded by intruding flower portions that produce a most pleasing effect.

In 'The Coming of Love,' Theodore Watts-Dunton, the binding medium is crimson crushed levant, with mirror polish. The large heart is in blood-red inlay. The radiating lines are in gilt, as are the repeated heart motifs, geometrically arranged.

Kipling's 'The Dipsy Chanty,' somewhat more interesting than usual at present, because of the author's controversy in regard to this and some others of his books with a New York publisher, is bound in Quaker blue crushed levant with the Zahn mirror polish devised by himself,



BOOK-COVER IN MYRTLE-GREEN LEVANT,
HAND-TOOLED IN ORIGINAL DESIGNS
BY OTTO ZAHN

and not yet successfully imitated. The flowers, which are Dutch pinks, are in crimson mosaic, with highly conventionalised stems, in gold tooling. The Kasidah of Haji Abdü El-Yezdi appears in apple-green crushed levant. It is heavily and strikingly tooled in a Persian floral pattern that closely approaches the Arabesque, and is in entire harmony with the bound volume. Crimson inlays add greatly to the effectiveness of this binding.

Hope's volume, 'The Dolly Dialogues,' is bound in ruby-red crushed levant. The tooling is very bold, and the

daisy stem motifs are much conventionalised, but very graceful curves. The larger daisy blooms are inlaid in white morocco. The smaller ones are tool marks.

'The Quatrains of Omar Khayyam' are dressed in a binding of pea-green crushed levant. The grapevine, its fruit, leaves and tendrils enclose a conventional rose-bush, with four blossoms in brilliant crimson mosaic. Fine panels on the back of the book are filled with rose and rose-leaf motifs.

Myrtle-green crushed levant has been the chosen binding medium for the volume by W. L. Andrews, entitled 'Sextodecimos et Infra.' The tooling follows the characteristic floral scroll devices of the French Renaissance of the sixteenth century, and the terminating flower ornament suggests, if it is not, the iris highly conventionalised.

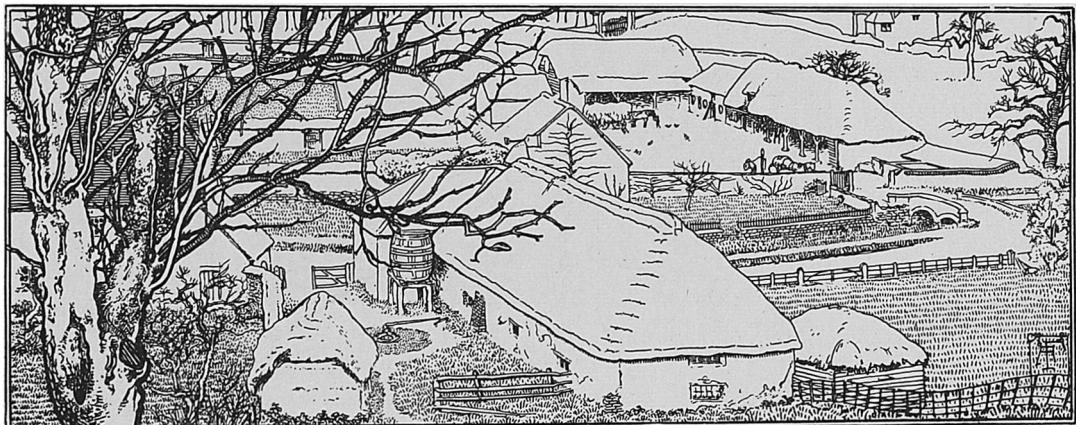
In 'A Jar of Honey from Mount Hybla,' by

THE ARTIST

Leigh Hunt, there is perhaps one of the best examples of Mr. Zahn's work in bookbinding. He himself considers it a masterpiece. The leather is deep red crushed levant. The stems are dotted and inlaid in blue-black. The flowers are in white. The central jar is in mosaic of robin's egg blue. Honey bees are introduced as reliefs to the exceedingly rich tooling. The book's edges are 'goffered' in gold and very delicate colours. The levant double is ornamented with ornate inlays. This was executed for a bibliophile in St. Louis, Mo., in whose library appear many examples from the establishments of the best binders, and is indeed a superb volume.

A charming peculiarity of Zahn's finest bindings is that the covers of his books may be opened to their fullest extent, even back to back, without injury and without the slightest crack. The specimens shown in reproduction herewith are good typical examples of his work. They serve to show something of his range, something of his originality, and something of his skill and achievement.

It will not be difficult, even for those who are not expert, to recognise in these illustrations a master hand, a well-equipped craftsman, as well as an artistic inspiration that easily makes him a true artist in book-binding.



A HEAD PIECE
BY A. H. FISHER

E XHIBITION OF WORKS BY MR. A. HUGH FISHER.

THE exhibition of works by Mr. A. Hugh Fisher, recently held at 17, Hanover Street, was a treat and a revelation to many who had previously only known the artist through his drawings published in the 'Idler' and elsewhere, an acquaintance which gave no hint of the range of subject treated, and the variety of mediums employed by him.

Among the oil paintings, a scene in a sunny apple-orchard, entitled *Springtime*, appeals to one as being infused with the cheery hopefulness of that season of the year.

Typical of the broad impressionistic manner usually affected by the artist in his paintings were the *Lambeth Palace* and the *River at Kew*, in both of which the running water was remarkably well rendered. *Not Quite in Tears* was a very successful little sketch of a toddling babe.

The water-colours that proved most attractive to us were *The Old Thatched Wall*, a landscape steeped in rural somnolence, *St Cloud from Meudon*, a breezy, lightly-touched sketch, *Southwold Backs*, and *St. Severin, Paris*, a brilliant impression of one of those many picturesque